

Atty. Docket No. 60,152-990

REMARKS

The following is responsive to the Final Office Action mailed November 30, 2004 and a telephone interview with Examiner Sharp of December 21, 2004. As set forth hereinbelow, the undersigned attorney believes that this Amendment After Final places this application in condition for allowance. However, if the Examiner finds that further amendments to the rejected claims are necessary to place this application in condition for allowance, a further telephone interview with the Examiner is respectfully requested.

In the Final Office Action, the Examiner allowed Claims 1 and 3 to 20 but objected to Claims 21 to 25. The following is responsive to such objections.

Claim 21 has been amended essentially as suggested by the Examiner in the Final Office Action at paragraph [15] *except* the amendment to Claim 21 does not include "generally parallel planar" before "annular surfaces." As discussed in the telephone interview with Examiner Sharp, the annular surfaces of the radial flange portion surrounding the body portion do not have to be "generally parallel planar annular surfaces," but could also be conical or even curvilinear. Based upon the specific findings by the Examiner, the shape of the annular surfaces surrounding the body portion are not critical to the patentability of this claim. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 21 as amended is patentable over the prior art cited by the Examiner and allowance of Claim 21 as amended is respectfully requested. The word "generally" has been deleted from the claims before "midway" as suggested by the Examiner based upon the understanding that the term "midway" is not an exact term.

Claim 22 has been amended to delete "generally" in line 4 to conform to the amendments proposed by the Examiner for Claims 24 and 25. As discussed in the telephone interview with the Examiner, the Final Office Action *incorrectly* states that Claims 22 and 23 are objected to, but would be allowable if rewritten "to include all of the limitations of the

Atty. Docket No. 60,152-990

base claim and any intervening claims" in paragraph [13] of the Final Office Action. Obviously, Claim 22 is an independent claim and thus does not need to be rewritten in independent form as agreed by the Examiner in the telephone interview. Thus, the Applicant respectfully submits that Claims 22 and 23 are patentable as specifically found by the Examiner at page 7.

Claim 24 has been amended as suggested by the Examiner and thus the Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 24 is also in condition for allowance.

Claim 25 has been amended substantially as suggested by the Examiner, *except that* "generally parallel" has been inserted prior to "annular surfaces" in line 5 instead of "generally *planar* parallel annular surfaces." As set forth above, the shape of the annular surfaces surrounding or circumscribing the body portion are not critical to the patentability of the claims in this application.

The Applicant and the undersigned attorney would like to thank Examiner Sharp first for his helpful suggestions for amending the claims in the Final Office Action and second for his courtesy extended to the undersigned attorney during the telephone interview. The telephone interview was limited to the matters discussed above.

Based upon the findings by the Examiner in the Final Office Action and the telephone interview with the Examiner on December 21, 2004, the Applicant respectfully submits that this application is now in condition for allowance. However, if the Examiner finds that this application is not in condition for allowance, the undersigned attorney respectfully requests a follow-up telephone interview.

Atty. Docket No. 60,152-990

Although it is believed that no fee is due for the filing of this Amendment After Final, the Commissioner is authorized to charge our Deposit Account No. 08-2789 for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayments regarding this Amendment. Further and favorable reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

HOWARD & HOWARD ATTORNEYS, P.C.

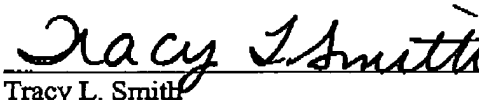


Raymond E. Scott, Reg. No. 22,981
The Pinehurst Office Center, Suite 101
39400 Woodward Avenue
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48304-5151
Telephone: (248) 723-0306

Dated: December 30, 2004

CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that the attached **Amendment After Final** is being facsimile transmitted to Examiner Jeffrey Andrew Sharp, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, at facsimile number (703) 872-9306 on December 30, 2004.


Tracy L. Smith

G:\W-Z\Whitesell\ip00990\parent\Final Amendment 12-30-04.doc